

2012 READER SURVEY



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Intro

I've been blogging since 2005. What started off as a blog specifically about teaching has morphed into an armorphous collection of posts which loosely branded as 'education, technology and productivity' but which, in reality, also covers design, politics, sociology, leadership and whatever I've last been reading.

As an educator and doctoral student I'm a great believer in the importance of feedback to improve performance. Whilst blogging is certainly not a *competition*, I do have an audience which I'd like to grow and serve better. Absent my own classroom I consider my blog a place where I do some teaching. The great thing about that teaching is that I'm learning at the same time.

Early in January 2012 I was inspired by completing a blog reader survey on Michael Hyatt's blog (<http://michaelhyatt.com>) to create my own. Mine was less ambitious and detailed than his, partly to



keep it short, and partly because SurveyMonkey's free accounts only allow for ten questions!

In total, 136 people completed the circle which was available on my blog for one week. To give that some perspective, as I write this around 1,300 people subscribe to updates via RSS or email and around 6,000 unique visitors per month.

The results fascinated me.* Read on to find out why!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the word 'Pug' in a cursive, stylized font. The signature is written on a light gray background.

*Although I quote some of the free text entry inputted by readers, I do not identify them in this report by name. Those names that do appear are mentioned by readers (and are people I consider friends).

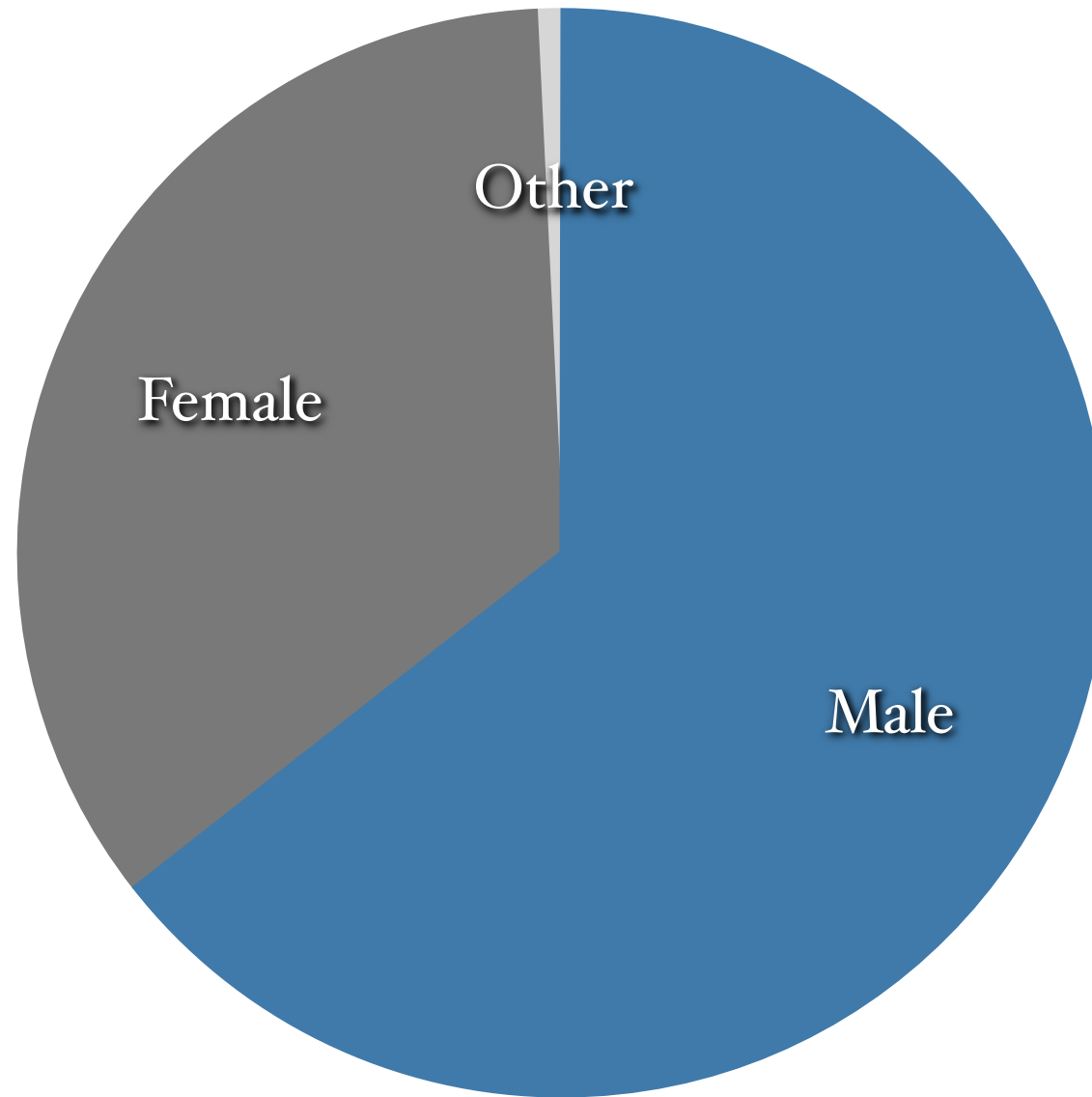
Results

Before diving into what I think your responses *mean*, I want to present the quantitative elements in the simplest way possible.

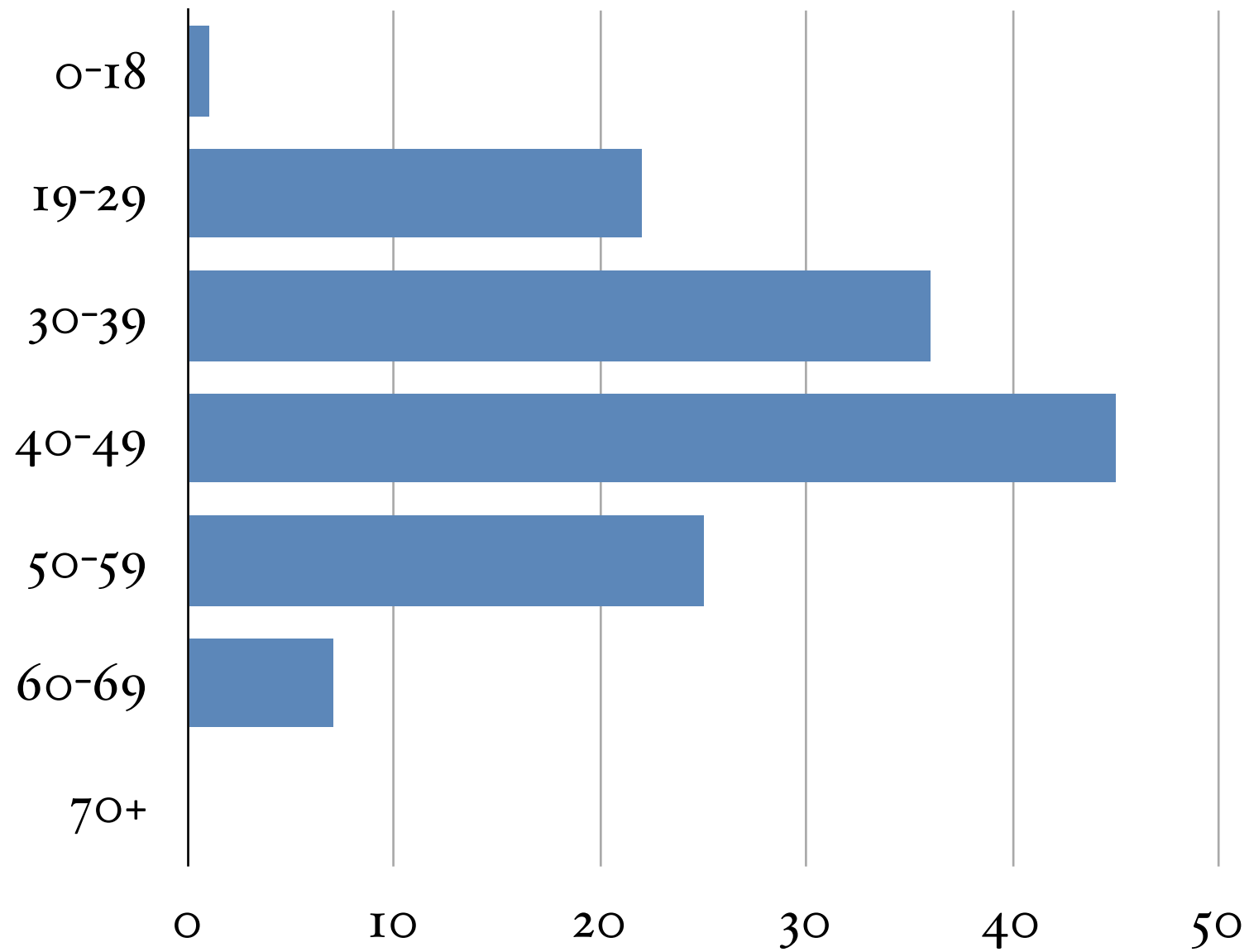
The next few pages show the demographic information gleaned from the survey along with details such as where readers found out about my blog, how long they have been reading it, and how they find out when I publish new blog posts.



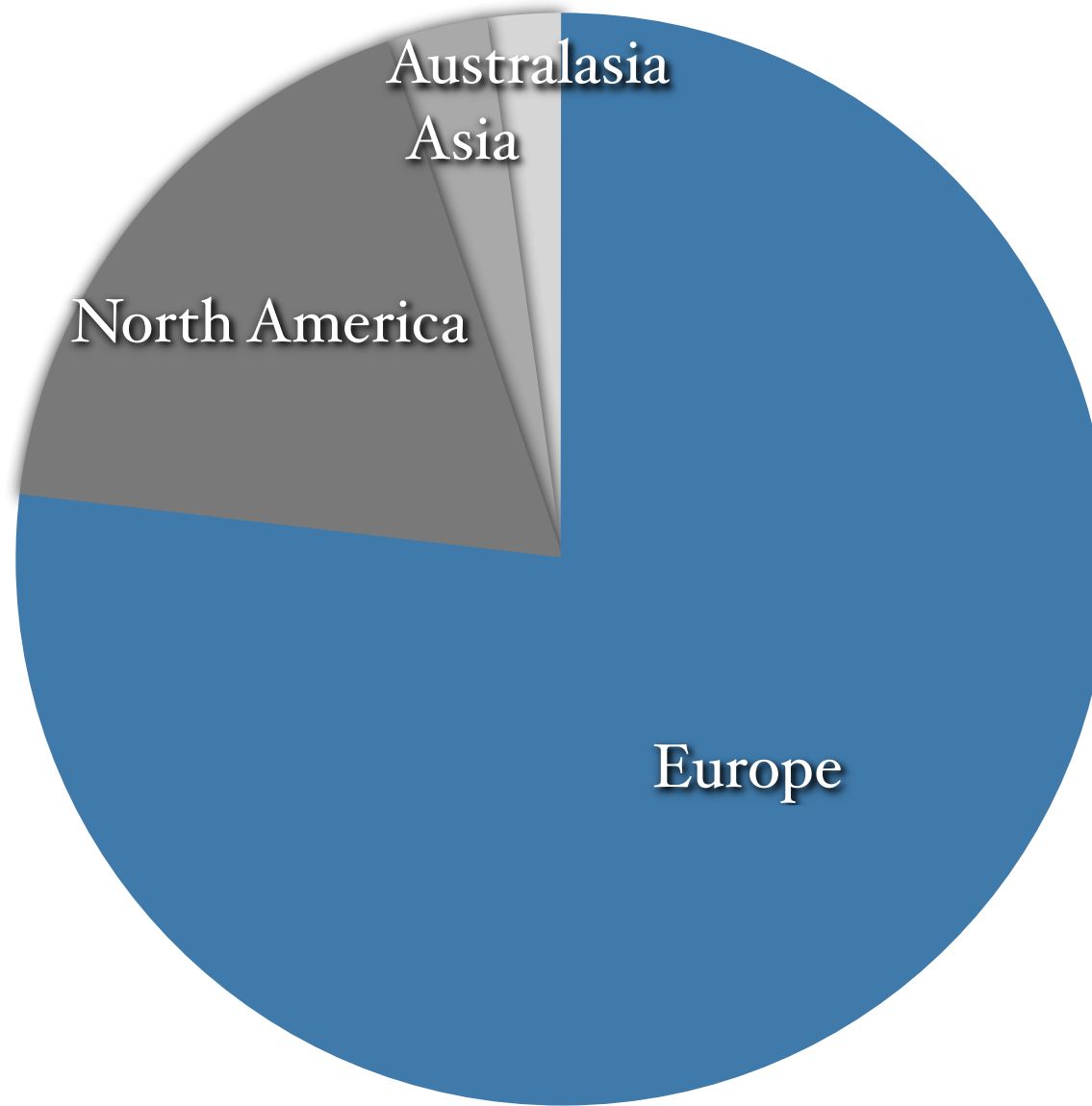
Gender



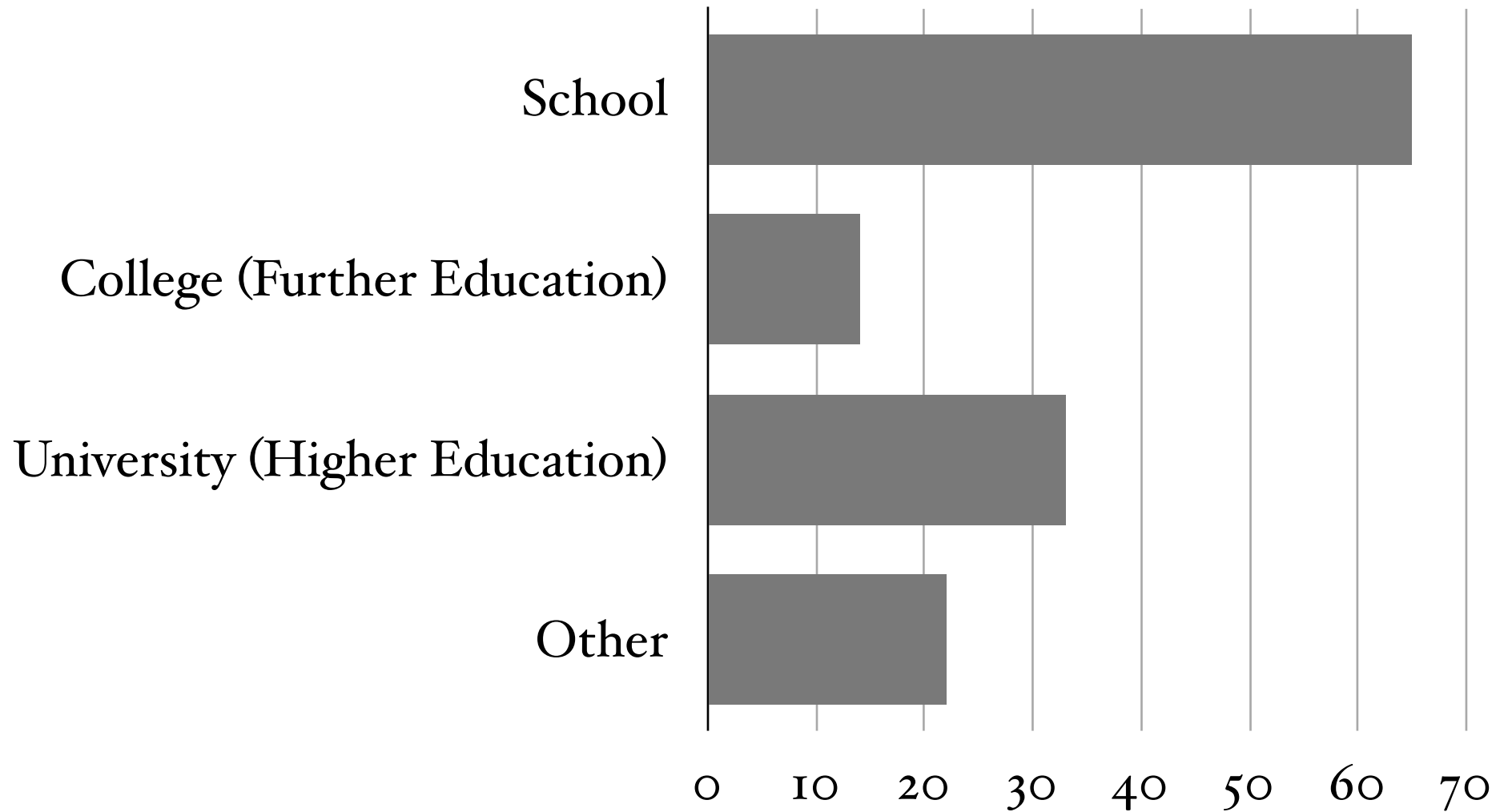
Age



Location



If you work in education, which sector describes you best?



(Misc.)

Supply Teacher

Adult basic education ...literacy

Seconded teacher now with Govt. agency in teacher training in ICT

Association/professional society

[College] but mainly HE in FE

Community College

Retired Primary Headteacher

County Office of Education

Healthcare

teaching college students about information and information literacy

efl teacher and trainer

Former teacher, have own business - clients often in education

Government

Governor

non-traditional/ online curriculum delivery

Leadership development

Current Information Studies PhD Student

Local Authority (Schools sector)

research student

[University] And School

(Communications within HE)

special primary

Corporate

How did you first find out about my blog?

You told me about it...I am your sister in law!

Internet search

Don't recall

Searched your name

Can't remember! No doubt via someone else; though quite who that was is anyone's guess!

Google+

Co-worker sent me a link to a post

Don't remember

stumbled onto it

Twitter

Search

Link off another blog

through twitter

Through twitter

Twitter

Via Eylan Ezekiel and TeachMeet

Through Twitter

From Twitter

Don't remember.

I think a blogroll or maybe twitter

Twitter

It is so long ago I can't remember!

Twitter

Following you on Twitter after meeting at a TeachMeet

Twitter

Twitter link from Tom Barratt

Don't know, been reading for years, probably followed a link

Twitter

Don't recall...ran across it somehow =)

Radio podcast

Recommendation

StumbleUpon

Have followed since the MrBelshaw days after coming across the ed tech talk podcasts - probably 3ish years ago?

probably stephen downes, but certainly a link from someone else's blog to a post here that interested me at the time (though can't remember what it was)

Via twitter

Twitter

Through a comment on a blog I was following.

Google

Quoted in some other education email I received. posts of interest

twitter

Don't recall

er

Twitter

My wife was given a load of resources from Roy (?) Huggins. Your work was included on the hard drive - a quick Google search lead me to mrbelshaw.co.uk

Twitter

twitter

By following you on Twitter!

When I was training in 2007/08. It was linked from a website comment somewhere.

personal contact

From another blogger

Difficult to recall: I've been following, on & off since you were Mr Belshaw, a newish teacher at Ridgewood.

From your Twitter updates

via twitter

Via twitter

Via twitter

Twitter

Referenced from another, several years ago. Sorry, can't remember!

can't recall

Retweet of someone I followed on Twitter.

Via twitter

via the school history forum

Twitter!

Twitter

I can't recall. I "ran across" your online thesis, marvelled at the idea and work, decided to follow you on Twitter and the rest is history. Serendipity?

Via twitter

Twittet

I like the style. I always learn something and what I think is great is that you always take the time to reply to comments!!

A link through my Twitter feeds

Through reading other education and education technology blogs, I don't remember the actual one where I saw yours but...

Since I am doing my B Ed dissertation on Education Technology I came across your blogs and your tweets many times.

Through twitter

Following you on twitter

FriendFeed link to you.

Through Twitter
Probably via twitter
twitter

Through Twitter

Job guide 2 years back via twitter

Probably through a mutual connection. It was many years ago...

Twitter during #gtauk

Tweet.

Someone else referenced your old MrBelshaw blog

Twitter

Internet search

Twitter followers with similar interest

Twitter

Twitter

Started following you on Twitter, started life on Twitter following lots of 'educators'. Your name popped up in conversation and various RT's so I began following you and discovered your blog.

Through following you on Twitter.

OLDaily

Via Twitter

Google+

Twitter

Recommendations on twitter

I can't remember! Probably through a link from TES or another teaching blog.

Twitter

Via Twitter

Through following you in Twitter.
twitter

Heard some dude mention your name on EduTalk radio.

Google recommended items based on other subscriptions.

Top ten educational blogs suggested by David Hopkins

You told me

Via twitter

Twitter

Gogole

Twitter

From Twitter ... I think!

Twitter

Through Nick Dennis telling me about his friend who had created a tutorial on how to cut & play a section of a DVD ;-)

Randomly googling for teaching ideas when I was training as a secondary teacher

Google search for teachers using technology (I think)

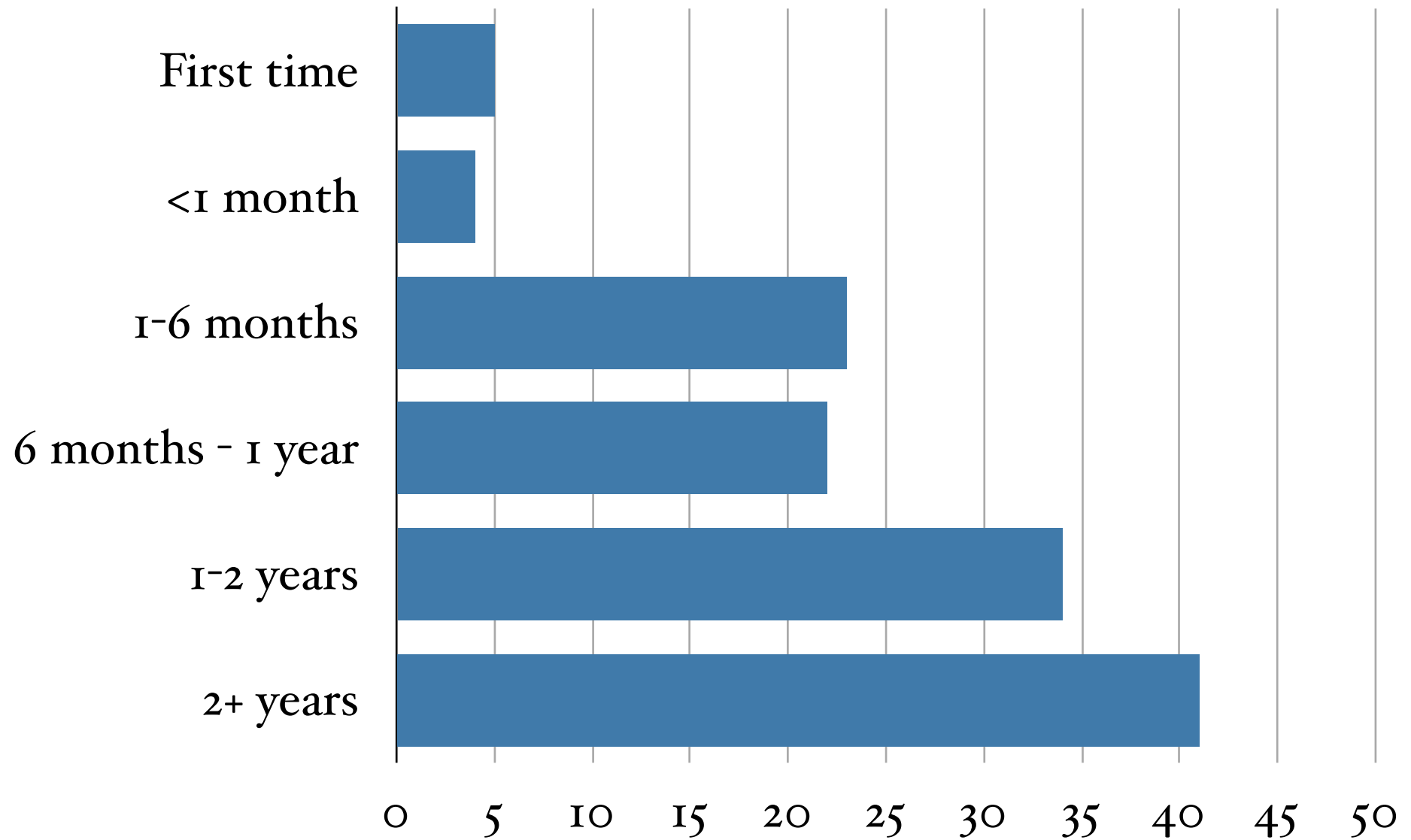
Link on twitter

Via twitter but I cannot remember exactly how.

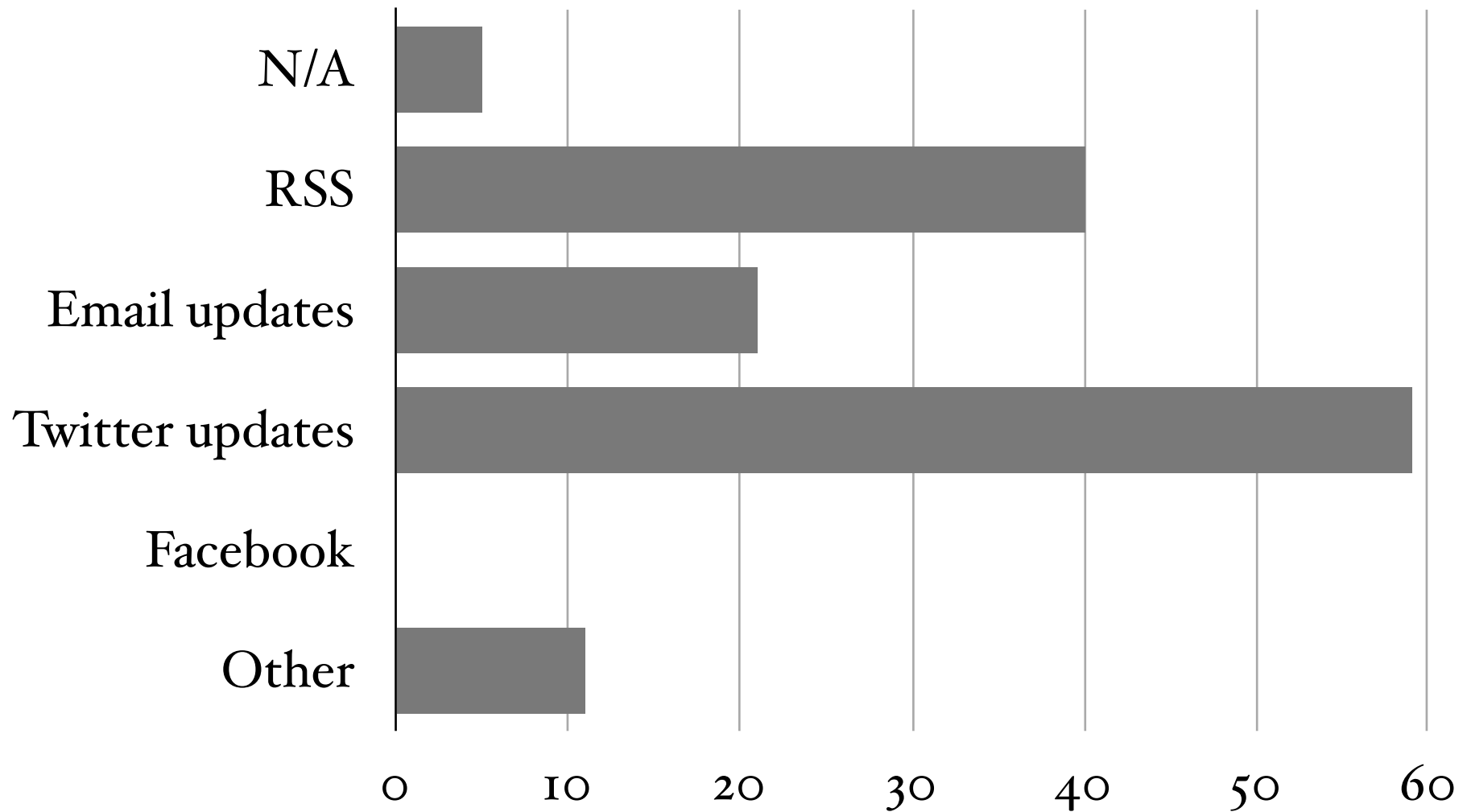
History Teachers' Discussion Forum

Through Twitter

How long have you been reading my blog?



How do you find out about my new blog posts?



(Misc.)

[RSS Feed] & Twitter updates

Twitter AND RSS

Just check at random intervals

RSS / Twitter depending on which happens to be in my line of view at the time. (Or others' posts about them)

Google+

[RSS Feed] I also see them on Twitter

[Email updates] and twitter

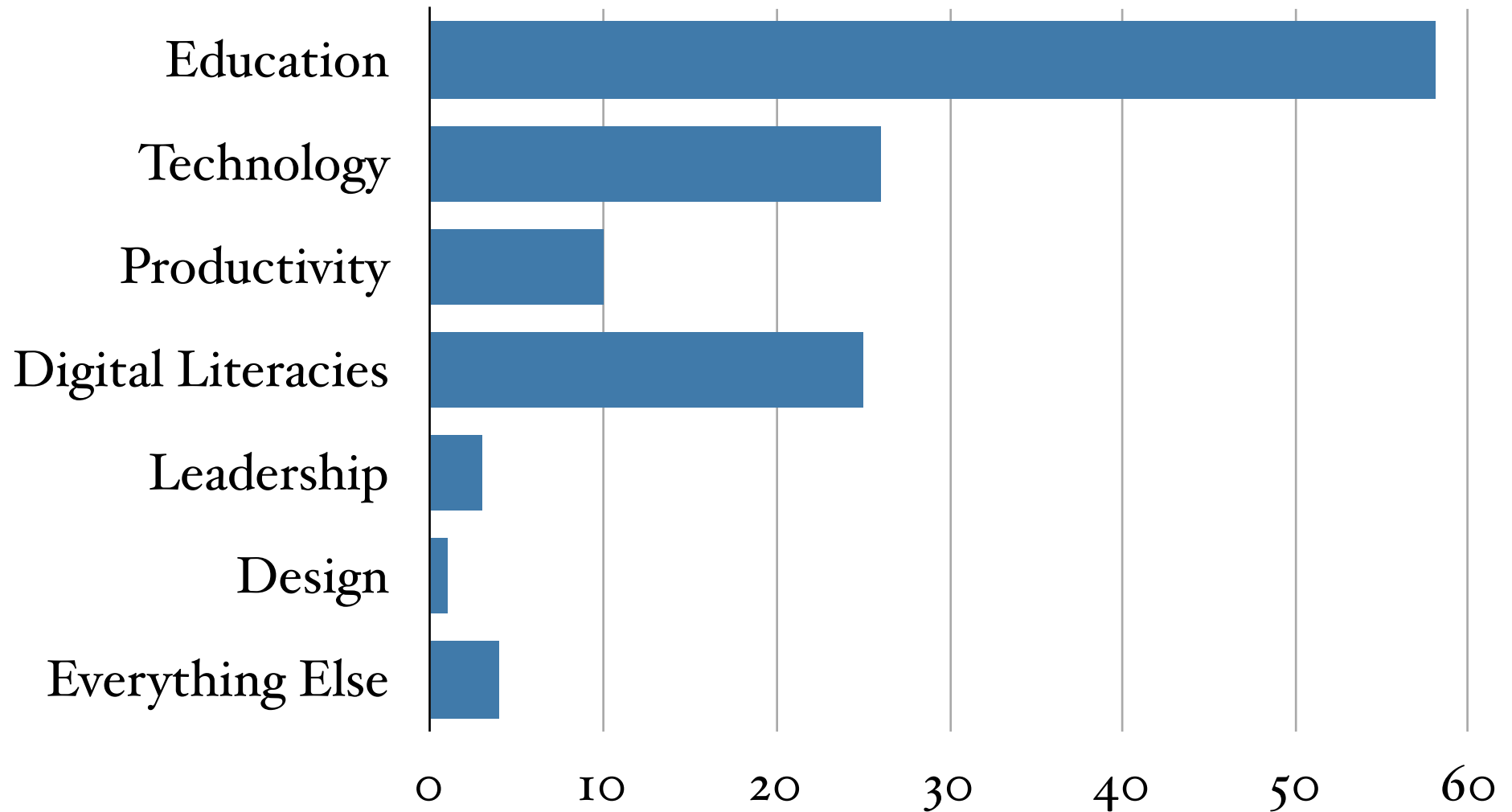
Check front page twice a week

Daily check

Google+

Google+

Which of the things I blog about interests you most?



Improving my blog

To me, there's nothing more interesting than when people are given a free-text box to fill in! The question: *What can I do to make my blog better?* was answered by around half of the total number of people who filled in the survey.

The next few pages list verbatim, uncorrected and uncensored responses to the question of how I can improve my blog. Some are humorous, and many are insightful. I removed two: one due to self-identification, and the response from my wife!



Clearer focusdignit more prominent and specifying the context[s] that it relates to as one size does not fit all "context is key". Thanks

Do more on technology and things for kids to improve confidence In school

Off hand, can't think of anything in particular.

Keep doing what you're doing

Half the time I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about. Maybe thats because its very focussed on HE? Sometimes its just too academic for me.

The one thing I miss most from your blog was the weekly resources. I started reading your blog because of the incredible amount of ed tech info and resources, there seems to be less of that lately

Not sure - just keep doing what you're doing!

Its good, just keep it up.

I like your blog the way it is its easy to navigate and also easy to read, I usually have to enlarge site pages to read but your site is a pleasure to read - its also not cluttered

More of the same please

I like how you have categorised your most popular blogs but I found it quite tricky to search for your others.

I think it'll be another great read this year and your posts and views within them will depend on what you're discussing. Hope the year goes well for you.

more regular posts

I'm not looking for it to change. When you were working in schools your blog posts resonated more with my experiences, as I work in schools. The blog has changed as your role(s) have changed and, whilst the content may no longer be as relevant, it still remains interesting.

More productivity stuff.

Sometimes I miss your updates as twitter is so busy, maybe have a direct email update.

ensure philosophical stuff and theorizing is grounded in real practical and do-able in-school work.

I'm not sure. It's pretty good. Maybe take a wider view (hard to explain what that even means - but it means something like, be less focused, draw more associations between things).

keep doing what your doing!

..... tough one.

Start analysing what the government are up to - by this I mean, the government announce things in bits over a period of time - I think you have the ability to put all the 'bits' together to get the implication of the whole!

I am in particular interested in productivity, continous learning and how organisations operate better. I think the education industry is a special industry where you can have unique organisational designs. Like the Lumiar School from Ricardo Semler, which provides a unique concept and ideas for the future.

It's pretty good as it is

I like it as it is TBH

Dancing girls :o)

Shorter, more frequent entries.

is fine as is. Maybe survey needed to have multiple answers for a couple of questions.

I am very interested in your blog posts about education but also look forward to your posts about productivity....ie how I use my macbook pro more of these please ;o) thank you

Keep it coming!

Be less pushy :-)

I don't feel able to make a suggestion for improvement - although I do miss the productivity post. I would accept though that you have probably got into a flow that works pretty well for you and therefore are researching productivity less. Thanks for providing me with good INSET and thoughtful provocation over several years.

Keep doing what you're doing!

More useful to c;assroom, cross the divide from research & innovation to actual delivery to bottom set Y10

Just keep it up! It's enjoyable, and informative.

Make it less academic. This may sound like a backwards step, but I stopped reading a few articles recently as I didn't really understand them. Some of the posts assume that we have the background knowledge that you have.

Keep on writing!

continue

You are a clear, concise writer. Keep up that clarity!

I especially liked User Outcomes Weekly

The most useful thing I think you've ever done were the series of summaries of what you were reading online. I know they're time consuming, but bring that back would be ace!

I am a newcomer to learning with technology so am reluctant to offer "better" suggestions. I have been somewhat immersed in your writing and presentations and have found them absolutely inspiring. I like the "start here" part of your blog so do keep a central spot of connection. Must admit I was somewhat confused when I first came across your work---Does he work for JISC? How is his thesis related to JISC? There seemed to be an overwhelming array of connections---I now see that this is what learning is all about! I keep "tabs" on your work via Netvibes, your posts enable me to think (and do) in different ways and always provide a context. You are a context-setter and that is

affirming to my learner-wanderer space. Keep saying "where this comes from" Thank you.

It's fine

I like your blog just the way it is! :)

I think that they are very inspiring for an university student.

I'm not sure I really enjoy what you write about ! I like the mix of topics

It is geared to older secondary sector. More primary?

Acknowledge others as much as possible, push out to newbs, bring in knowledge from the margins and even outside your normal channels. Different metaphors from different fields.

Just keep blogging. I wish I had the discipline.

Happy new year!

Convert some of the longer posts to podcasts/ vodcasts?

Continue to do what you've been doing!

More of your well thought out opinions.

Fine as it is. Gearing to a fickle audience is a precarious strategy. I read your posts for what you are interested in, and that extends my interests.

This is a tough question... however, I think the posts I have enjoyed the most are the ones that have been directly influenced by your work at JISC; including such material as the slides and video's you have shared about presentations. Also, I really enjoy posts that are sparked from debates on Twitter. More of these types of posts, I would personally enjoy reading.

Ignore these suggestions and just keep on keepin' on, Doug.

Keep doing what you're doing.

Keep doing what you are doing! :)

If I could answer that then I'd consider blog content consultant as a possible income source!

Perhaps more images and use of video/audio (sometimes it's great to be told something rather than read it). Do you podcast? Disclaimer - I am quite new to your blog so perhaps there is actually plenty of this and I've just not come across it yet!

more short videos

It is quite hard to find older posts with your minimal design.

Even more practical ideas that can be applied in the classroom!

I'm still new here so have no opinion on the matter. Should something come to mind, I'll let you know. The little I've seen impresses me greatly. The design of the different information channels and the tone of your writing are inspiring and of great value.

it has a great and diverse collection of stuff - i dig into the archive quite a bit. I personally care less for the productivity stuff BUT admire how much you are able to get done so maybe I should focus more! It is one of the blogs i ALWAYS refer new folks to e-learning to.

Interesting as it is. Like to see how Blogs develop over time. (I like more images!)

More reviews.

Modesty

Can see how education, technology and digital literacies all sit comfortably together, but never sure about productivity. Clearly tech can support better productivity, but wondered whether this theme might be better suited in a different forum? To be honest, I'm glad the thesis is over as it was taking over the blog and you've got a lot of interesting other stuff to talk about. I really enjoyed the "Things I found this week" that you used to do a while ago.

Couldn't answer the last question, as what I like about your blog is the range of topics and the fact you challenge widely accepted ideas. I'm not sure it's an idea of making it better, but just carrying on pushing forward with what you are doing will keep me reading!

I used to like your old Sunday reflective post of what you had come across in the week. You still share your links but found the reflective process interesting.

I really enjoyed the links posts where you shared what you had read each week.

Keep on keepin' on!

More links to other blogs of interest, including sources of the ideas you write about it.

More guest bloggers

Bring back the Sunday supplement

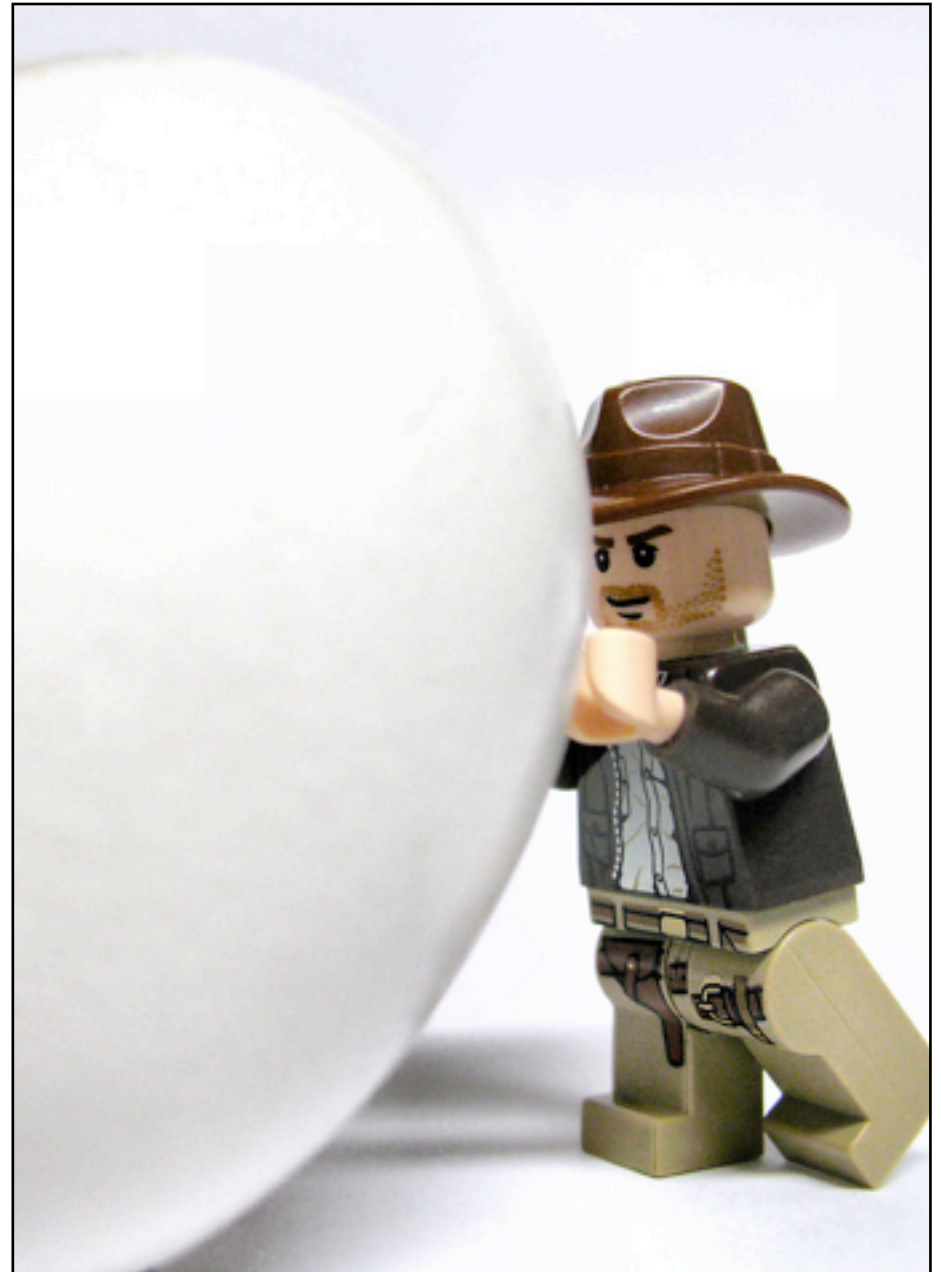
Analysis

First and foremost, I am very grateful and slightly humbled by the kind words expressed in the above. Although 'modesty' was mentioned as something I could improve upon, I'm genuinely surprised that so many people actively choose to read what I write.

The results of this reader blog survey surprised me for a number of reasons. I suppose I have to remember that this *might* not be representative as respondents were self-selected and did not constitute a random sample.

That being said, the biggest surprises for me were:

- **Age** - I thought that the majority of people reading my blog were about the same age as me (early 30s)
- **Location** - Google Analytics shows that at least as many people view my blog from North America as Europe. On reflection,



regular readers are probably more likely to be from the UK.

- **Things I Learned This Week** - I haven't updated this series of blog posts since December 2010 but it's still something a significant number of people thought should make a return.
- **Twitter** - I suppose five years since first signing up I shouldn't be surprised by the ability of Twitter to drive traffic to blogs. But I find staggering the number of people who eschew RSS feeds (and email) and rely on it for new post notifications.

You can never please all of the people all of the time, or so the saying goes. That proved to be true with, for example, my posts on productivity which some wanted more of and others preferred to avoid.

Likewise, some believed I have a specific audience in mind, with some believing this is secondary schools and others thinking I focus too much on

Higher Education. Having worked with Reception through to Postgraduates, I do try to be as inclusive as possible, but perhaps I should signal a bit better to whom I'm directing such posts.

The issue, of course, with specifying an audience is that those who might have found it applicable to their context may be put off reading it. It's something for me to consider.

Many people talked of my 'clarity' in writing which is reflected in the design of my blog. I particularly liked the comment about not having to resize text when arriving at my site. It's also good that people value my opinions on various educational matters. There were some weak signals about perhaps doing more multimedia in the form of short videos or podcasting. Again, it's something I shall consider.

Calls for me to make research more relevant to work in classrooms is a difficult one. Whilst I still feel I have my 'finger on the pulse' when it comes to what's going on in the schools sector, I have now been out of the classroom for around two years. You never forget what it's like, but more

than any other context I've experienced, the schools landscape changes very quickly.

There's definitely some scope in perhaps hinting at how things I write about could be applied in a variety of contexts, including the classroom. I shall have a think.

Finally, I believe that I've got some work to do in pointing those who have recently discovered my blog to the other places that I write online. There's good reasons (or there *were* good reasons at the time) for my heterogeneous presence but I agree that keeping up with them all can be confusing.

I plan to improve the design of my blog (which has recently had a more minimalist overhaul) to make it easier to find posts and to represent the various places I write online. If you're reading this and would like a list, see the Appendix.

Conclusion

Whilst I cannot put into practice the preferences and wishes of all of my readers, I commit to making the following changes to my blog on the basis of this inaugural reader survey:

1. Look into the possibility of the return of *Things I Learned This Week*.
2. Think carefully about the possibility of creating a separate Twitter account solely for announcing new blog posts from doughbelshaw.com/blog. (I would then retweet this from @dajbelshaw)
3. Re-introduce the one-click automatic translation that used to be a feature of my blog. (This is an attempt to widen the number of readers from non-English-speaking countries)
4. Where possible, create video and audio to get my points across.



5. Consider (and mention explicitly) the applicability of the ideas I mention in my blog posts.
6. Recommend other voices for people to follow.
7. Keep in mind that my reader demographic may be older than I am. (I'm not entirely sure what this means in practice!)
8. Remember that many of my readers enjoy the diverse interests I have and enjoy me 'mixing it up'.
9. Assess the readability of blog posts and perhaps flag up (in a non-patronising way) the more 'academic' ones.
10. Include relevant images in posts to break up the text.

Appendix

Original, full-length posts

- My blog (<http://doughelshaw.com/blog>)
- Literaci.es (<http://literaci.es>)
- Synechism (<http://synechism.com>)
- Doug's Conference Blog (<http://dajbconf.posterous.com>)
- Purpos/ed (<http://purposed.org.uk>)
- DMLcentral (<http://dmlcentral.net>)

Shorter updates and links

- Thought Shrapnel (<http://thoughtshrapnel.com>)
- Doug's Ideas Garden (<http://ideasgarden.posterous.com>)
- Doug's FAQ (<http://dougsfaq.posterous.com>)

Social networks

- Twitter ([@dajbelshaw](https://twitter.com/dajbelshaw) & [@dajbconf](https://twitter.com/dajbconf))
- Google+ (<http://gplus.to/dajbelshaw>)
- Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/dajbelshaw>)

(Please note that I limit myself to the number of people I follow on Twitter to enable meaningful interactions. I also do not add people as connections on LinkedIn without having met them in person - or at least having done some significant work with them online)

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